

# Little Angels Early Learning Curriculum

Toddlers are inquisitive by nature. Striving for independence and insatiably curious, these newly mobile explorers are natural learners, eager for new skills, and on the cusp of major steps forward in their language, physical, social and cognitive development.

We recognize the importance of these early years and our Little Angel's program is designed to support those big steps. With warm, nurturing teachers by their side we offer your child the opportunity to reach their greatest potential in all areas including: Language and early literacy, large and small muscle skills, early math and science concepts, and social and emotional development.

## Language and Early Literacy

Language at this age is starting to blossom, with the babbles and coos of infancy now transforming into the multiple-word phrases of toddlerhood. We provide a language-rich environment that encourages your toddler's progress toward achievement of developmental milestones. Teachers continually model language, expand children's phrases, and engage them in rich conversations.

Language guides the road to literacy, fostering a love of books through stories read aloud, expanding speaking and understanding through daily conversation, and assisting growth in all skills – such as story comprehension, vocabulary development, and fine motor – that will be needed for the first steps toward pre-reading and pre-writing.

### Listening

#### We learn to:

- Follow one-step directions
- Listen intently to a short children's book
- Increase vocabulary and comprehension
- Participate in the give-and-take of conversations
- Listen and move to music

#### We learn it by:

- Engaging in group or individual activities that require following simple directions
- Listening to books read aloud
- Exploring books independently
- Conversing with teachers who model communications both one-on-one and in groups
- Participating in group songs, rhymes, and games

### Speaking

#### We learn to:

- Increase vocabulary, particularly names of objects and actions
- Use one or more words to describe a feeling, drawing, or picture in a book
- Initiate short conversations with teachers and peers
- Ask short questions in conversation

**We learn it by:**

- Looking at and describing language-rich photographs, books, and matching games that stretch our vocabulary
- Talking to teachers and peers at eye level
- Having conversations with teachers and friends about daily experiences and activities such as cooking or art creations

**Pre-Reading****We learn to:**

- Focus during read-aloud time
- Increase short-term memory and recall
- Increase vocabulary
- Develop preferences for familiar books and stories

**We learn it by:**

- Participating in songs and fingerplays
- Participating in read-aloud time or retelling favorite stories to ourselves or our friends
- Exploring books quietly on our own
- Noticing written labels on classroom objects and learning centers

**Pre-Writing****We learn to:**

- Develop pincer grasp to pick up small objects
- Begin to use writing tools
- Make purposeful marks such as scribbles on paper

**We learn it by:**

- Picking up small, yet safe objects
- Manipulating, pounding, squeezing, and flattening squishy clay
- Drawing with large crayons and paper
- Assembling simple puzzles and whole-piece puzzles
- Playing with large pegboards

## Math

Math is a thrilling way for toddlers to make sense of their world. With rich opportunities for manipulating objects and experimenting with quantity and numbers, the environment helps 1 and 2 year olds take their first steps towards understanding important mathematical concepts.

Our teachers plan a learning environment in which children can compare, sort, group, and manipulate safe, toddler-sized materials and learn from “number talk” such as “more/less,” “big/little,” and “full/empty.” A toddler room is full of activities, from small figures for sorting to shape boxes for matching, cups for stacking by size, and sensory tables for learning comparison of quantity and volume. Together; they add up to the foundation of mathematics.

## **Spatial Relations**

### **We learn to:**

- Understand concepts such as under/over, inside/outside, on/off and up/down
- Describe our actions using spatial terms

### **We learn it by:**

- Moving through a simple obstacle course while a teacher describes our actions: "You are going down the slide and through the tunnel."
- Hearing teachers talk continually about what we are doing: "You are standing next to the refrigerator."

## **Numerical Understanding**

### **We learn to:**

- Understand quantity: identify one, more than one, less, etc.
- Count to two or three
- Discriminate sizes: big vs. small, long vs. short

### **We learn it by:**

- Hearing quantity labels expressed in conversation: "You have one cracker. Would you like one more?"
- Following snack setup instructions: "Let's give everyone a napkin. Put on here and on there."
- Teachers modeling language: "How many crackers do you have?"
- Manipulating stacking and nesting toys in various shapes and sizes from the Math manipulative shelf

## **Concept of Time**

### **We learn to:**

- Indicate the end of an event with words
- Use a word or words to indicate a past or future event

### **We learn it by:**

- Listening to teachers talk about time: "Now we are going outside. We will go in after you finish in the sandbox."
- Hearing time words in daily interactions with teachers: "Yesterday it was colder than it is today. You had to wear your heavy coat yesterday."

## **Classification**

### **We learn to:**

- Identify similar items from a variety of objects
- Match an appropriate block to the correct shape on a toy

### **We learn it by:**

- Playing sorting games: "Show me all the plastic cats."
- Experimenting with placing blocks in shape boxes or pieces in simple puzzles

## Science

Young children are scientists by nature. They are born with a strong sense of curiosity about how things work and an innate desire to make sense of the world. Toddlers display scientific behavior throughout their days, from stomping in puddles, to investing a sandbox, to intently watching a butterfly in flight. Our curriculum nurtures and builds on these natural instincts, offering toddlers meaningful learning experience that continually foster and develop their scientific thinking skills.

Teachers weave scientific learning into all aspects of a toddler's day. Through international experiences, meaningful conversations, and enriched environments – asking children “what if” questions, growing herbs in a paper cup garden, recording what objects float or sink in a water table – teachers help children become skilled observers, inquisitive investigators, and lifelong researchers.

### Simple Problem-Solving

#### We learn to:

- Identify a problem verbally
- Explore possible solutions before attempting to solve a problem

#### We learn it by:

- Listening to stories read aloud that feature simple problems and solutions
- Exploring answers to questions such as “What do you think will happen?”
- Articulating and solving day-to-day problems together with teachers
- Experimenting with shape sorters, puzzles, and busy boxes

### Active Exploration

#### We learn to:

- Use an object as a tool to complete a task
- Understand the basic concept of balance and weight

#### We learn it by:

- Exploring materials and activities that engage our sense of touch, taste, smell, sound, and sight
- Manipulating playdough with tools such as cookie cutters, safe scissors, and small rolling pins
- Building, stacking, and balancing blocks of varied shapes and sizes

### Space and Volume

#### We learn to:

- Experiment with volume
- Demonstrate ability to define space

#### We learn it by:

- Filling, dumping, and comparing containers with varied materials including water, sand, and rice
- Building things like a fence from blocks or a bus out of chairs

## **Active Questioning**

### **We learn to:**

- Question when exploring materials
- Formulate “why, what, and how” questions

### **We learn it by:**

- Describing and discussing our observations and experiences with teachers
- Creatively (and sometimes messily) experimenting with paints and easels, sand play, and creative movement

## **Social Emotional**

The toddler years are a time of rapid social-emotional growth, when learning to put on shoes and eat lunch independently is of major importance. These young children crave independence; their communication skills are blossoming, and they begin to initiate more peer interactions. Yet they’re still gaining the verbal and cognitive skills necessary to navigate social interactions on their own, and look to their trusted teachers – with whom they’ve developed strong bonds – for the confidence and guidance to try new things and explore new relationships.

The curriculum offers a foundation for helping toddlers and twos safely and confidently build their independence. It also focuses on nurturing relationships and trust with the adults and children in the classroom, emphasizes a harmonious classroom environment that fosters social-emotional development, and provides guidance practices that help toddlers learn the skills they need to interact with peers and adults.

## **Emotional Literacy**

### **We learn to:**

- Comfort ourselves by seeking out a special object or person
- Identify our own feelings
- Listen and respond to caregivers’ suggestions
- Take care of some of our own needs

### **We learn it by:**

- Being encouraged by caregivers to ask for help
- Reading books about feelings
- Having caregivers identify, acknowledge, and validate our feelings
- Having caregivers provide consistent, reasonable limits
- Being encouraged to put our clothes on, feed ourselves, and try other new skills

## **Nurturing Relationships**

### **We learn to:**

- Use trusted adults as a secure base from which to explore the world
- React to other’s emotional expressions
- Demonstrate concern about the feelings of others
- Play near other children; use similar materials or actions
- Seek a preferred playmate; show pleasure when seeing a friend

**We learn it by:**

- Offering a blanket or hug to a crying child
- Hearing our caregivers talk about feelings: “Mylic is feeling sad. She is crying. What can we do to help her feel better?”
- Playing with materials and toys in a group setting
- Getting to know other children and developing common interests

**Cooperative Interactions****We learn to:**

- Respond appropriately to others’ expression of wants
- Express feelings during a conflict
- Seek adult help to resolve social problems

**We learn it by:**

- Offering a toy or a hug to a peer
- Seeing caregivers help peers work together (e.g., sharing a book or a ball, or comforting a friend)
- Receiving guidance from caregivers (e.g., “Tell Joey that you don’t like it when he takes your car.”)
- Receiving quick predictable responses to our request for help

## Community and Christian Values

A toddler’s natural sense of wonder and curiosity provides a perfect platform for developing values and understanding diversity, personal identity, and his or her place in the larger community. Children at this age begin to develop a disposition that influences how they view the world and relate to others, making it the ideal stage of development for fostering positive attitudes that will last a lifetime.

We introduce these complex concepts, through teachers who model respect and encourage children to reflect on themselves, their peers, and the world they live in. Daily activities like watering flowers, viewing diverse family photos, turning off the lights when not in use, and playing with differently abled figurines help children begin to step outside their own boundaries and embrace important concepts such as acceptance, appreciation of diversity, stewardship of the environment, and personal responsibility. Introduce basic Christian identity images that are age appropriate such as the cross, images of Jesus, Mother Mary and other appropriate images that correlate with the seasons in the church.

**Emotions and Behaviors****We learn to:**

- Identify emotions by name
- Regulate our emotions
- Take appropriate care of personal needs
- Develop a sense of self as both separate from and connected to others

**We learn it by:**

- Talking about our feelings, with the support of teachers
- Cleaning up after meals and play with teacher guidance
- Bringing items from home to share with the group at “show and share” time

**Relationships With Others****We learn to:**

- Make friends and develop positive relationships
- Be aware of and respect gender; race, ethnicity, and physical differences in people
- Express compassion or empathy

**We learn it by:**

- Playing together in learning centers
- Looking at books and hearing stories about people of different cultures or ethnicities
- Drawing self-portraits
- Sharing our toys, being sensitive to classmates’ feelings, and showing other acts of compassion

**Cause and Effect****We learn to:**

- Understand cause and effect and how repeated actions make things happen
- Use an object as a tool to complete a task
- Begin to anticipate what’s next
- Understand consequences of our actions

**We learn it by:**

- Playing with musical instruments to explore how different actions cause different sounds
- Using scissors, shovels, and other developmentally appropriate tools
- Requesting familiar books and anticipating familiar text
- Connecting our actions (e.g., taking a friend’s toy) to an effect (e.g., making our friend cry)

## **Physical**

Young children behave the way they feel. Toddlers are notorious for this, expressing everything they feel through their actions. The direct relationship between a child’s physical health and social, emotional, and cognitive achievements makes it crucial to ensure they feel strong, healthy, and well nourished every day. Growing up healthy also requires safe and age-appropriate opportunities for physical activity in an environment that builds good habits and positive attitudes.

We provide such an environment, enabling children to gain an understanding of how their bodies work, what they need, and how to protect them. Teachers provide a rich learning experience that help toddlers develop strong bodies, become self-aware, and lay the groundwork for a lifetime of healthy habits.

## **Movement and Body Awareness**

### **We learn to:**

- Strengthen and refine small muscles
- Strengthen and refine large muscles
- Identify body parts and feelings

### **We learn it by:**

- Practicing small muscle skills like writing, cutting, drawing, and painting
- Developing walking, running, jumping, dancing, climbing, and stretching skills
- Spending time in the natural world
- Singing songs such as “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes”

## **Nurtition**

### **We learn to:**

- Understand and identify “healthy” foods and where they come from
- Verbally express likes and dislikes related to foods

### **We learn it by:**

- Growing vegetables from seeds
- Serving ourselves appropriate portions at meals and/or snack time
- Discussing our daily snack foods

## **Health and Safety**

### **We learn to:**

- Follow simple safety rules
- Practice proper hygiene
- Understand the importance of playing safely both indoors and outdoors

### **We learn it by:**

- Following simple instructions such as “We walk in the classroom; we don’t run.”
- Following signs and examples that illustrate proper ways to wash our hands, blow our noses, and cover our coughs